
MEDICAL EXAMINER ACTIVITY

The staff members of the Medical Examiner's Office are involved in a wide variety of activities commensurate with the mission of the office including responding to and investigating the scene of death, performing postmortem examinations, certifying the cause and manner of death, and providing information and assistance to families. Investigators, who are familiar with the emotional trauma of an unexpected death, communicate directly with the family as do the Medical Examiner pathologists, who review their findings with the families in order to clarify the many questions that accompany a sudden loss of life. The office also provides referrals to grief support services.

In all cases investigated by the Medical Examiner, it is essential that the decedent's identity is established and the next-of-kin is located and notified regarding the death. In addition, property belonging to the decedent must be controlled and released according to legal requirements. In most cases these issues are resolved expeditiously. In certain cases, identification requires additional effort in locating dental, medical or police records. Some individuals may have died leaving no next-of-kin or next-of-kin far removed. Ensuring that all leads have been exhausted in pursuit of next-of-kin can be a very time consuming but ultimately rewarding effort.

The postmortem examination on each decedent includes the preservation of various body fluids and tissues for microscopic and toxicologic analysis. Photographs are taken of the external and internal portions of the examination, which are available for review at a later date if needed. Photographic documentation is also an essential item in those cases where the pathologist must provide court testimony. Forensic anthropology is another important activity necessary to resolve skeletal cases and difficult identification issues.

Medical Examiner pathologists and investigators provide testimony in court and at depositions. Staff participates in meetings with police, medical professionals, and attorneys. A recent addition to the duties of the Chief Medical Examiner is expert medical consultation and testimony in cases involving nonfatal domestic violence assaults.

Autopsy reports and related data from individual investigations are provided to law enforcement agencies, to prosecuting attorneys and to many other agencies including Labor and Industries, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Consumer Product Safety Commission. Drug deaths are reported to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN).

Medical Examiner investigations require frequent contact between the Medical Examiner's Office and various media personnel. Staff members are skilled in responding to the media inquiries that occur daily. The Medical Examiner pathologists and other staff participate in a variety of medical conferences, and provide information on a regular basis to law enforcement and to medical personnel on various aspects regarding the role and function of the Medical Examiner's Office.

The data collected and presented in this and other Medical Examiner annual reports also provide baseline information for further analysis. Medical Examiner staff analyzes data to study relevant death investigation topics that have applications in such fields as law enforcement, medicine, law, social sciences, and injury prevention. Examples include infant mortality, teenage suicide, child abuse, law enforcement restraint, investigation of vehicular traffic accidents, and investigation of therapeutic complication deaths. In addition, the Office participates in teaching medical students, pathology residents, emergency medical service, and law enforcement personnel.

In 2003, staff participated as speakers at universities, conferences, and training seminars for law enforcement, medical, legal, and social service personnel in the following presentations and lectures:

Richard C. Harruff, M.D., Ph.D.

Associations, Committees and Boards:

- King County Child Death Review Committee
- Washington State Child Death Review Advisory Committee
- King County Elder Abuse Council
- Advisory Board, University of Washington Certificate Program in Forensics
- Community Advisory Board, University of Washington School of Nursing ,
Advanced Practice Forensic Nurse Specialist Program
- King County Jail Health Services Quality Assurance Committee
- Member, National Association of Medical Examiners
- Member, American Academy of Forensic Sciences
- Member, Washington State and American Medical Associations

Publications:

- Traffic Fatalities. Chapter in *Handbook of Forensic Pathology* (RC Froede, editor)
College of American Pathologists.
- SIDS Training for First Responders. CD-ROM produced by ELN Publications, Seattle, WA,
developed and directed by SIDS Foundation of Washington.
- *Washington State Child Death Review State Committee Recommendations: Preventing
SIDS and Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths*, Washington State Department of Health.

Trainings and Educational Activities:

- Participant, TOPOFF 2 Mass Disaster Exercise, Seattle, WA, May 12- 14.
- Participant, "Reaching Towards Cultural Competency,"
King County Diversity Training, September 25.
- Course Director, King County Medical Examiner's Office Forensic Conference,
"Problems in Forensic Pathology," Accredited by University of Washington Office for
Continuing Medical Education, Course Director

Scientific Presentations:

- Evaluation of Iron and Macrophages in Meninges of Infants Dying Suddenly and Unexpectedly.
Clark EGI, Raven KP, Anderson-Wooley D, Harruff RC.
American Academy of Forensic Sciences Annual Meeting, Chicago.
- Causes of Sudden Death in Infants: A Three Year Comparison of New York,
NY, King County, WA, and Montevideo, Uruguay.
Landi K, Harruff RC, Gutierrez C, Rodriguez A, Palenzuela, Greco MA.
Society of Pediatric Pathology Annual Meeting, Washington DC.
- Ecstasy use, multiple perspectives shed light on use of 'club drug':
Youth, young adults and MSM in Seattle.
Banta-Green C, Goldbaum G, Kingston S, Hanrahan M, Harruff R, Logan B, Golden, M,
American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco.

Local and Regional Educational Presentations:

- Medical Testimony in Criminal Homicides.
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office
Seattle, WA, January 25
- Radiation Injury. Problems in Forensic Pathology
King County Medical Examiner's Forensic Conference
King County Medical Examiner's Office, February 5
- Death Investigation and the Medical Examiner
University Preparatory Academy
Seattle, WA, February 6
- Pattern Injuries and Strangulation. Core Training for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners
Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress
University of Washington
Seattle, WA, February 25
- Harborview Medical Center Paramedic Training Program
King County Medical Examiner's Office
Seattle, WA, March 26

- Traffic Fatalities and Infant Death Investigation
Medico-Legal Investigation of Death
University of Washington Extension's Certificate Program in Forensics
Seattle, WA, May 5
- Homicide Investigation and Patterned Injury
Basic Homicide Investigation Course
Regional Justice Training Center
Burien, WA, May 14
- Occupant Kinematics
Traffic Collision Reconstruction Course
Washington State Patrol Academy
Shelton, WA, June 18
- Medical Examiner and Coroner Response
Multiple Fatalities Incident Response Course
Washington State Emergency Training Division
Seattle, WA, June 24
- Evidence Collection from Homicide Victims
Violent Crime Investigation Conference
Regional Justice Training Center
Burien, WA, October 22
- Pattern Injuries and Strangulation
Core Training for Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners
Center for Sexual Assault and Traumatic Stress
University of Washington
Seattle, WA, November 4
- Death Investigation and the Medical Examiner
The Overlake School
Redmond, WA, December 9

Alfred Noriega, Lead Medicolegal Death Investigator

- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Co-presentation by Alfred Noriega and Greg Hewett, Program Manager
Seattle University
Seattle, WA, May 9
- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Co-presentation by Alfred Noriega and Greg Hewett, Program Manager
Seattle University
Seattle, WA, May 16
- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Seattle Police Community Chaplaincy
Seattle, WA, May 19

- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Co-presentation by Alfred Noriega and Greg Hewett, Program Manager
Seattle University
Seattle, WA, May 23
- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Co-presentation by Alfred Noriega and Greg Hewett, Program Manager
Seattle Police Community Policing Academy
King County Medical Examiners Office
Seattle, WA, June 18
- Death Investigation and Notification/Interaction with Next of Kin
Seattle Police Community Chaplaincy
Seattle, WA, August 18
- Role and Responsibility of the King County Medical Examiner
Puget Sound Chapter of American Association of Legal Nurse Consultants
Seattle, WA, September 16
- Potential Risk of Drunk Driving
Northshore School District
Seattle, WA, October 6
- Seattle Police Community Policing Academy
King County Medical Examiners Office
Seattle, WA, December 8

Katherine Taylor, Ph.D., Forensic Anthropologist and Medicolegal Death Investigator***Associations:***

- Member of the Attorney General's task force on Missing and Unidentified Persons
representing the Washington Association of Coroners and Medical Examiners
- Fellow, American Academy of Forensic Sciences

Presentations:

- “Outdoor Crime Scenes”
Presentation to the King County Search Dog Handlers
Kent, WA, January 3
- “Introduction to Forensic Anthropology”
Presentation to the Green River Community College Criminal Justice Class
Green River Community College
Auburn, WA, February 2003
- “Mock Expert Witness Testimony”
Presentation to the Seattle University School of Law
Seattle University, March 2003

- “Missing Persons and Unidentified Bodies”
Presentation as part of the Violent Crimes Investigation Conference
Burien, WA, October 3

James A. Sosik, Jr., Medicolegal Death Investigator

- DUI Presentation for Woodinville High School Driver's Education Class,
Woodinville, WA, March 19
- DUI. Presentation for Woodinville High School Driver's Education Class,
Woodinville, WA, May 13
- DUI Accident Reenactment for Lake Washington High School Senior Class
(for Prom & Graduation Night),
Kirkland, WA, June 6

Table 12-1 **Weekly Variation of Deaths Investigated by the King County Medical Examiner's Office**

	TOTAL
Number of weeks studied	52
Mean number of cases assumed	34.9
Maximum in any one week	117
Minimum in any one week	48

Table 12-2 **Weekly Variation of Autopsies Performed by the King County Medical Examiner's Office**

	TOTAL
Number of weeks studied	52
Mean number of autopsies	22.96
Maximum in any one week	42
Minimum in any one week	15

Organization of the King County Medical Examiner Division 2003

